

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please add the following new claims:

Sub C10
-- 36. (New) A method of exposing a conductive structure that protrudes from a surface of a semiconductor device through a solder mask positioned on the surface of the semiconductor device, comprising:

reducing a thickness of least portions of the solder mask laterally surrounding the conductive structures.

B' Jul 91 37. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein said reducing comprises reducing a thickness of substantially all of the solder mask.

38. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein said reducing comprises exposing the solder mask to at least one of radiation, a plasma, and a shrinking agent.

39. (New) The method of claim 36, wherein said reducing comprises removing a material of the solder mask with selectivity over a material of the conductive structures.

40. (New) The method of claim 39, wherein said removing comprises etching the material of the solder mask with selectivity over the material of the conductive structures.